



# London Region of U3As

## MINUTES

Meeting Title:	<b>Chairs Network Day</b>
Date/ Time:	<b>27<sup>th</sup> February 2026, 10.30 am - 3.30 pm</b>
Venue:	<b>Face-to-face at LIFT, 43 White Lion Street, Islington. N1 9PW</b>

10.00-10.30	Registration and coffee. Delegates matched to tables.
10.30	<p><b>Welcome</b> (Val Girling ) , Palmers Green and Southgate u3a. Introduced the LRU3A committee. There should be (registered) 31/43 u3as representing London U3A today. Jenny Wilson (JW) and Val Girling (VG) have been visiting many u3as, trying to explain what the London Region is about, and how it can support them. VG referred to the LRU3A Constitution. There will be common threads from that running throughout the day. Both JW and VG consider the Chairs Network Day very important to share and support. The plan was, at various points during the meeting, members will move around the room to ensure the best experience possible. There will be timed activities. Photographs will be taken (hands up defined who didn't want to be in them). There will be feedback from each table after each session.</p> <p><i>Our constitution- We (London Region) must <u>provide a forum</u> in which all u3as in the network area have the <u>opportunity to liaise with each other</u> and with the <u>Trust</u> and <u>encourage and support u3a growth and development activities</u> in the Network area.</i></p> <p><b><u>Session 1 : What makes a successful Committee member?</u></b></p>
10.40-12.15	<p><b>Activities were focussed around 6 different scenario question cards.</b></p> <p><b>Each table had a different scenario question and discussion arose around each one.</b></p>
Question 1-	<p><u>Would you /do you ONLY recruit someone with a specific role in mind? Do you use the role description?</u> Hillingdon suggested that she was recruited after 2 years of membership to become Chair. VG joined the discussion and confirmed that we all agreed that the post of treasurer asked for a background with relevant skills for such a position. Maybe the use of an application form, vetting using the form and previous jobs and skills. Enfield stated that their Business Secretary was trained on the job. Newham said they were lucky to have such a good team. PR/Comms/Liaison rep works with access groups. People often do not know what they are good at. Agreed that Chair, Treasurer and Secretary all require minimal organisational skills.</p>
Question 2-	<p><u>Due to members' reluctance to serve on the committee, do you currently have committee members with dual roles? How does this work out? Do you have spare places on your committee- is your general membership aware of the strain this might cause?</u> Enfield has 12 on their committee, with work shadowing roles being used well. Bexley has 5 shared roles. Hillingdon has 8 on their committee, again with shared roles. Tower Hamlets has between 8-10 on their committee, some are outside the committee. Newham has 7 on its committee. There was discussion about members with negativity – particularly related to use of 'Beacon'. JF-confirmed that everyone has a role description and</p>

	<p>should be following behavioural policy. We should have a word with that member. Barnet- suggested to use the 'personal touch', take that person aside, what is the reason for this negativity. We need to realise that some members have issues. There are the Trustee role and legal situations, of course there is a Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Role descriptors- recruit person firstly, or the role firstly. Tower Hamlets- emphasised that there are role descriptors on the National website. Easy to re-write the role, simple descriptors. Softer and not onerous. Best not to give them the whole role descriptor as would be overwhelming.</p> <p>JW - the issues /problems we have are across all u3as. Dual roles, sharing the work, but also get some good inspiration. The TAT was mentioned on the Archers radio programme yesterday.</p>
<p>Question 3-</p>	<p><u>How would you channel a very new u3a member with little or no experience of the u3a organisation, but who would be a great asset on the committee?</u> Idea that we should 'flatter' new members was discussed, so not to become too much of a clique. The introduction of a 'row' of chairs for new members at monthly meetings is used across majority of u3a's. Monthly meet-up of new members at local café or pub. New members' Coffee morning used extensively across majority of u3a's. Befriending a new member, 'buddy' system used across a few u3a's. Quiz night or similar events requesting helpers.</p> <p>If someone is joining the u3a, they are looking for something. Getting them involved, being friendly, invite them to the committee meeting. What can we do for them? RUG/HERO- making the coffee/tea a good start.</p> <p>VG- how useful could these new members be? Hillingdon- monthly meeting, focus group. In Hillingdon, there is 35 in the 'really useful' group, highlighting their individual skills not 8! Being proactive or positive. Befriending people is vital.</p> <p>Dulwich – uses an induction process for new committee. Gives each committee member a job to do. Also, use of a "buddy" for them, work shadowing is so useful.</p> <p>JB- we cannot stand still. New ideas, leads to succession. Doubled membership by using WhatsApp.</p>
<p>Question 4-</p>	<p><u>How do you deal with a someone who is very keen to become a committee member, but who is highly unsuitable? What do you consider unsuitable?</u> Enfield u3a has had experience of dementia, a person unsuitable for the committee. VG- has said this works both ways, we are observing you, they are observing you. Finding new members; strengths and skills is vital to growth. Redbridge- general growth is not always good; groups being unavailable/closed to new members is negative effect. However, it does bring in more money.</p> <p>Sustainability is a crucial factor- DH- we need new energies, new interest groups which would lead to growth, diversity, with wider people getting message. Limitations of venue, group, sizes, etc. Social media is a positive issue to increase numbers as well as WhatsApp as well as Next Door Neighbour app.</p>
<p>Question 5-</p>	<p><u>You have identified someone who would make an excellent committee member, but who is very reluctant. How might you persuade/encourage him or her?</u> The suggestion of going got a drink and invite the member, with a subsequent suggestion of inviting them with social activities would attract some would be committee members. Then proposing they volunteer, then hopefully to take on a position like Chair or similar role on the committee. If members like activities, you can share group leadership. Like shared Chair role. Reliability and commitment are both vital. Flattery is vital. The use of subcommittees was discussed and agreed that they are very useful as outside main committee.</p> <p>Use u3a week to promote your u3a. This can be little steps, using an interest table, every month a table will show different skills/interest group. Tower Hamlets- said having the opportunity to join the committee meeting as an observer is very important.</p>

<p><b>Session 2-</b> 11.35- 12.15 Question 6-</p>	<p><b><u>Discuss the benefits of growth for your u3a and the u3a nationally?</u></b></p> <p>Northwood- repeated what many u3as said- that younger members are needed.</p> <p>Richmond- confirmed that a bigger/wider range of subjects needed to cater for more choice to attract different members. Redbridge stated that more numbers doesn't equal more group leaders. Although it would help the financial situation improve.</p> <p>Richmond-We have to make more numbers to help sustainability and more groups created means that there may be more conveners or leaders. Redbridge- social mornings can happen without conveners or leaders. It's the social aspect that members like. Quality, not quantity, sustainability and growth are the important factors.</p> <p>Newham- it's about engagement, getting people out, meeting others, wellness and mindfulness. Encouragement etc. is very important. Digital inclusion is being encouraged too.</p> <p>Queens Park -a more affluent area-bringing the 2 together and Kilburn, a deprived one. This is a new u3a. Sharing strategies to acquire new members, good practice for all of us.</p> <p>Using the LBB (Bexley), Town Hall, to advertise local groups, attracting new members. Bexley u3a has combined with Age UK. People who have joined are only going to the u3a.</p> <p>Wanstead- closed membership (against TAT rules). Some u3a's were unaware of this rule.</p> <p>Newham- had an Open day. Local football club, a community football club, Forest Gate is working on word of mouth amongst the members.</p> <p>VG- 'meet and mingle meeting' idea- is a good for a start up group.</p> <p>Richmond- 7-8% increase in annual membership. A word of mouth is the reason, the use of 'greeters' and encourage people and make them feel welcome.</p> <p>Richmond offers more activities, so smaller ones are losing members as not enough activities. There is no problem in recruiting new members, as new members have increased by 200+ this year alone. The major issue is retaining membership, although there are plenty of interest groups with vacancies and members attend monthly members' meeting.</p> <p>61% increase in membership in Palmers Green/Southgate over the last 4 years.</p> <p>CB- had some good ideas- offer members to join for free period (join after 3 months); using website more effectively to attract members; using social media, like Facebook and Instagram as a way forward. Organic growth, rather than paid advertising. Advertising can be £200+ on Facebook and similar platforms, but would reach a large audience. We can encourage people, future membership – we can measure how successful we are on a smart phone.</p> <p>Palmers Green and Southgate confirmed that the idea of 'meet and greet' is highly successful, also the importance of talking to everyone.</p> <p>JB- when starting Trust online, during COVID, members were removed on Beacon. There was a 15-month period to pay for 12 months (3 months free). Meet and greet is a popular concept at monthly meetings.</p> <p>Crouch End – interesting to find out about joiners and leavers – and their expectations and reasons.</p> <p>Hillingdon- Instagram -set up in their u3a. Started slowly in its infancy, and maybe even TikTok.</p> <p>Consider – what difficulties have you met if you have found materials available from the TAT Brand-shop useful/ National press/adverts? Only two Committee members can log in to the u3a Brand shop.</p> <p>Very expensive in the Brand shop. Not value for money.</p> <p>Tri-fold leaflet – cannot add your own u3a photos. Generic photos can only be used in your leaflets or adverts. Sutton u3a produced their own tri-fold leaflet and this was passed around the groups. 'Fit for the Future' - in a summarised leaflet was discussed. Advertise our u3a membership as less than 50p a week! Tri-fold logo/used a triangle themselves, used u3a graphics.</p>

	<p>VG- confirmed that everyone is trying to personalise their leaflets. DH- agreed that it is difficult to personalise leaflets. This needs to be investigated by TAT.</p> <p>JF- EDI information on the main TAT is still out of date, this has been passed onto office staff</p>
12.15-12.35	<p><b><u>Allan Walmsley Address- The Ups and Downs of Being a Chair</u></b></p> <p>Involved in Fit for the Future for the last 2-3 years... the era we are now in is more important as the Trust looks to the future.</p> <p>43 u3as are easy to manage in London. More difficult for other regions: 230 u3as in the South East; 200 u3as in the East of England.</p> <p>Challenge for the Trust is about conveying the national strategy and the 'fit for the future' initiative. This led to the creation of the Council being set up 10 months ago. Allan explained that he was a Lancastrian, mentioned the M1 and M6 were essential parts of the infrastructure in the UK. The Council should be the sort of motorway of communication for u3as. The setting up of the Council has caused some initial settling in pains! But once in place and working efficiently it will be a key part of the way in which communication transfers between u3a members and the rest of the movement. Allan joined South Birmingham in 2017, there were 300 members within 9 months. Initial 'flush' of membership was great. Not so much growth after this time.</p> <p>"We are aware of fundamental flaws. We are more introverted than I think the movement should be." If we are not seen as an integral part of the community, then we are never going to attract membership. It is important to encourage u3as to form more partnerships; more relationships with local councils; local voluntary organisations, etc. The u3a has diversified since its original start up. In 10,15, 20 years time- running the organisation will be a different beast. Not enough being put into what we should be in line in the future.</p>
Q&A session	<p>We know we must attract new people, the next generation of members.</p> <p>Strategic plan is to help and support u3a's. We must promote u3a in the right sort of way to attract new people.</p> <p>Omnibus (National) recent survey of 2000 members of the general public has provided useful insights. It used an audience from 18+- 90 years old. Only 18% knew about the u3a. Of that 18% -90% were incredibly positive about the u3a. This was to create a baseline to start from. No age bar to the u3a.</p> <p>All imagery on website/leaflets is of elderly people! Object clause uses the terms: 'retired people;' and 'older people'. Imagery and attitude must match what we really want. People who are 'not in full time employment'. There is no age criteria.</p> <p>DH mentioned that there was a new u3a Animation of the u3a's offering. This was shown over the lunch break. Previous videos of real people had received criticism for the imaginary used, the people in it. The use of animation avoids that, no hang-ups over black people, age, gender, etc.</p> <p>Comments about our history of success attracting retired people and utilising their skills! We should be supportive of retirement and not anti-retirement. But be aware of our mixed age range.</p>
<p><u>Session 3</u></p> <p>13.45-14.30</p>	<p><b><u>Interest Group Matters</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Which do you think would attract younger members?</u></b></p> <p>Discussion included active sport; paddle group; outings; theatre trips; technology and science groups; playing music; jazz appreciation (45 in one u3a group alone!); reading groups; AI, etc.</p>

	<p>New younger members want new experiences- short, sharp experiences and social events. More men attracted- how? Walking; football; pickleball; grumpy men; transport group- trends at the moment- steam group. Talk, outing-4 women, 36 men! We cannot advertise for men only, as we would be breaking the law. There are many other competitors in some areas- 151 Club; Friends group; Loggers; CIU; WI etc. Males/ethnic minorities are still underrepresented. Mens' reading group is supported by TAT; Men in Sheds; sports discussion group ( 10 men, 1 female)- still popular; Arsenal Women Supporter Group.</p> <p>VG- men in PGS are in factual subjects – History/Science and walking groups. Created 2 more History groups; 2 more Science groups; and created 2 Geography groups as this did not exist beforehand.</p> <p>Evening and weekends- people are often on their own, weekends can be lonely. Sunday pub lunch ( RW)- majority of lonely individuals attend. Theatre, dinner groups at weekends and evenings are extremely popular.</p> <p>VG- 160 people turning up on a Saturday night; other u3a has arranged a 1940's dance evening. Dinner/Dance due in March to celebrate anniversary of u3a formation. Social events at weekends are good for lonely people.</p>
	<p><b><u>How to encourage volunteers to be group conveners?</u></b></p> <p>Buddy/supporting other members.</p> <p>Rotation of chair/leader – different person leads it every month. 'Bitesize groups', term used by VG are extremely useful. A u3a can manipulate these into what they want.</p> <p>Enfield – used this 'bitesize' idea to their u3a and more members have started up new group support with group co-ordinator; then after 4 weeks, they can usually run the group.</p> <p>VG has made return visits to some u3as, and some are still in 'stuck' situation.</p> <p>JW- minimum requirement form filing for risk assessments.</p>
14.30-15.00	<p><b><u>Plenary- what will you take back to our u3a?</u></b></p> <p>Reflect on what you have learnt from today.</p> <p>Action Plan or List of ideas-</p> <p>Welling- personal note for the u3a committee; EDI policy update; Instagram and Facebook possibility and linking between Bexley u3a and Sidcup u3a.</p> <p>Bexley u3a-referred to computer viruses, posting on Facebook and public posting on it.</p> <p>Hackney- lots of ideas in his head and will take these back to base.</p> <p>Enfield- no activity sports groups yet but setting up a badminton group by Chair himself. Starting an Instagram post as well. Will try to move forward with only men groups; and weekend /evening groups.</p> <p>Dulwich- considering IT side; take up on Instagram; 'try booking' for organising trips and events. Payment for 15 months (3 months free); 'meet 'n' mingle'; local community coming together sounds nice in theory; men's' interest groups need addressing; not done 'bitesize' but will do; evenings/weekends events will be trialled.</p> <p><b><u>Comments from JW and CB- our Council Representatives-</u></b></p> <p>JW- evening/weekend events can be on Zoom online too.</p> <p>Tenpin bowling and evening /escape rooms can be also a new idea to attract new members.</p> <p>How do we generate this level of support/help?</p> <p>CB- work is continuing nationally; how do we project ourselves?</p> <p>National office has asked us to complete our experience of u3a (TAT). Hopefully in a helpful way. Short questionnaire- not just committee thoughts from all members.</p> <p>If we can find out what London u3as want /are happy about?</p>

	<p>National publicity campaigns- spoken about them to Sam Dukes (PR for TAT). He agreed that it is not good value for money.</p> <p>When the committee changes, after your AGM, go onto the Portal to inform the head office at TAT of the new chair, new email address and other new persons elected. RW will ask that you reply to her with these committee personnel changes as the portal does not share with MailChimp for email messages.</p> <p>Allan Walmsley said he 'soaked up the day'.</p> <p>JW- notes about recruitment of committee members is available.</p> <p>JW has provided ideas, guidance and help sheets for promotional information/advice on the Main website.</p> <p>RW will send evaluation feedback form to all attendees after the event.</p> <p>VG reiterated that the feedback form will be sent out to attendees. Please return it.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 15.30pm</p>
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## APPENDIX 1 - REGISTER

ATTENDANCE					
		<u>Present</u>		<u>Apologies</u>	
	<b>LRU3A Committee &amp; other posts</b>				
	Chair	Val Girling *	1		
	Jt. Vice-Chair, North	Vacant			
	Jt. Vice-Chair, South	Vacant			
	Treasurer	John Bent*	1		
	Learning Development Coordinator				
	Communications Coordinator				
	Secretary	Maria Guest-Naharnowicz *	1		
	Events	Rikki Wallman *	1		
	Talks Coordinator				
	<b>Guest:</b>				
	Allan Walmsley	Allan Walmsley			
	London Region Trustee	Jenny Wilson *	1		
	<b>London Region Local Networks:</b>				
	BOB	See Bromley			
	SW London	No rep			
	<b>London U3A Representatives</b> (Chair, Delegate, Other)	Chris Bulford *	1		
1	Abbeywood & Thamesmead				
2	Barnet	John Bent, Jim Jenkins(Co-C), Averill Lovatt( Co-C)	0 1+1		
3	Beckenham	Di Morgan ( C )	1		
4	Bexley	Rosemary Case (C)	1		
5	Brent				
6	Bromley			Sandy Bowden ( C )	1
7	Crouch End	Andrew Sich (C)	1		

Registered Charity Number 1186441

<https://lru3a.u3asite.uk/>

8	Croydon	Cariss Smith (LREC) Jenny Wilson (C)	1 0		
9	Dagenham	Folded but was on original list			
10	Dulwich & District	Neil Abrahams(VC)	1		
11	Ealing	Derek Atkinson (VC)	1		
12	Enfield	Michael Witter( C)	1	Kevin Hargreaves	1
13	Hackney	Ken Davison( C)	1		
14	Hammersmith & Fulham	John Lavers ( C )	1		
15	Hampstead Garden Suburbs (HGS)				
16	Harrow	Oscar Monterio ( C )	1		
17	Havering				
18	Hillingdon	Pauline Rees(C tbc ) Roger King ( comm mem)	1+ 1		
19	Hounslow				
20	Islington	Chris Bulford (D) Derek Harwood (web manager/LREC) Antonia Bendek ( C )	1		
21	Kenton & District	Dick Nathan ( C )	1		
22	Kingston			Luanne Higgins	1
23	Merton	Jane Fisher ( C )/LREC/EDI	1		
24	Mill Hill			Melvyn Sadler	1
25	Newham	Sang Kundi ( comm mem)	1		
26	North London	Michael Lewin ( VC)	1		
27	Northwood & District	Barbara Payne ( C )	1		
28	Norwood				
29	Orpington	Neil Woodhouse( C )	1		
30	Palmers Green & Southgate	Val Girling ( C)/LRChair Robert Holford(VC)	0+ 1		
31	Redbridge & District	Rikki Wallman ( LREC ) Stuart Wallman ( C )	0+ 1		
32	Richmond	John Cardwell ( C )	1		
33	Sidcup & District	Trevor Ford ( C )	1		
34	South Hillingdon				
35	Stanmore & District				
36	SE London	Chris Melville (Co-C)	1		
37	Sutton Area	Sue Deans (VC )	1		
38	Tower Hamlets	Jean Maynard ( C ) Vanda Green( comms )	1+ 1		
39	U3A in London	Tessa Morrison ( opening new one)	1		
40	Upminster			Lesley Elias	1
41	Waltham Forest	Christine Farnes ( comm mem)	1		
42	Wandsworth			Andy Crane ( C )	1

43	Wanstead & Woodford	Jan Martin(VC) Krystyna Derkacz( sec)	1 +1		
44	Welling	Maria Guest-Naharnowicz *	1		
<b>TOTALS</b>		Participants who registered: in attendance. u3as represented on the day: 30 out of 43 (70%) Apologies received from members: 6 u3as; u3as covered by apologies: 6.			

\*Duplicates not counted in totals